

Air Force kicks off Centennial of Flight commemoration

WASHINGTON—The U.S. Air Force joins the year-long Centennial of Flight celebration, which officially began Dec. 17 and continues through Dec. 17, 2003, the 100th anniversary of the Wright brothers' first powered flight.

The Air Force will participate in centennial events to honor a century of aviation heroes and communicate its contributions to airpower, from the earliest beginnings of powered flight to today's expeditionary aerospace force and the future in air and space.

"The world has changed dramatically since 1903, yet the drive and determination to harness the promise of flight has never been stronger," said Gen. John P. Jumper, Air Force Chief of Staff, "From the Wright Flyer to the F/A 22 Raptor, America continues to pioneer cutting-edge technology and its Airmen remain cham-

pions of innovation."

Three major events will occur simultaneously in Washington, D.C., Ohio and North Carolina Dec. 17 to mark the beginning of the Centennial of Flight commemorative year.

★ **Washington, D.C.** The ceremony at the National Air and Space Museum began at 9 a.m., with John Travolta as emcee. The event honored aerospace pioneers and leaders in modern aviation. Participants at this event included Gen. Richard B. Meyers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Dr. James G. Roche, Secretary of the Air Force and Gen. Jumper.

★ **Dayton, Ohio** Lt. Gen. Dick Reynolds, commander, Aeronautical Systems Center, hosted the inauguration of the Huffman Prairie Flying Field Interpretive Center. At 10:35 a.m., the exact moment the Wright Brothers first flew at Kitty

Hawk, a wreath-laying ceremony was held at the Wright Memorial. Gen. Lester L. Lyles, Air Force Materiel Command commander, provided the keynote address at a luncheon following the ceremonies.

★ **Kitty Hawk, N.C.** The 99th Anniversary Observance of Man's First Powered Flight featured more than 99 current and vintage military and civil aircraft flying over the Wright Brothers National Memorial at Kill Devil Hills, N.C. Gen. Ralph E. Eberhart, commander of North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command, participated in the ceremonies.

More information about Air Force Centennial of Flight events may be found on-line at www.centennialofflight.af.mil or by contacting centennial@pentagon.af.mil.

Mankind's first time

KITTY HAWK, N.C.—On his third attempt, Orville Wright takes the Wright Flyer for a 12-second, sustained flight Dec. 17, 1903. This was the first successful, powered, piloted flight in history. After months of studying how propellers work, the Wright brothers design a motor and an aircraft body strong enough to accommodate its weight and vibrations. When built, the craft weighed more than 700 pounds. This becomes the first "Flyer."

(Courtesy photo)



Error fuels base service station blaze

BY JAMES COBURN

37th Training Wing Public Affairs

LACKLAND AFB, Texas—A 50-year-old retired technical sergeant was severely burned on both legs recently after static electricity ignited gasoline as he filled gas cans in the bed of his pickup truck at the base shoppette at Lackland AFB, Texas.

Lackland Fire Chief J.L. Ball said a placard on the gasoline pumps warns motorists to put gas cans on the ground to fill them, but people might not notice them.

Tech. Sgt. Ed Jones, a Warrior Week instructor and one of the bystanders, removed his battle dress uniform top and wrapped it around the man's legs to help extinguish the flames, but they kept re-igniting. Thinking quickly, he pulled a window cleaner reservoir from a rack at the pump and poured the water on the man's legs.

A shoppette mechanic rushed the man to nearby Wilford Hall Medical Center in his pickup. Jones, who accompanied the man, also was treated for minor burns he received as he smothered flames.

Safety officials long have warned people not

to fill gas cans sitting inside vehicles or in truck beds because of the danger of gasoline vapors being ignited by static electricity.

Another hazard reported recently is getting back into a car and not touching a metal ground before returning to the refueling nozzle and causing a static electricity spark.

Lt. Col. Mullin, a former safety officer at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, now undergoing instructor pilot training at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, said the retiree "did one of the classic things you shouldn't do ... refueling external gas cans (above ground) with plastic or rubber shoes on. This is an extremely textbook case of static electricity igniting an instantaneous fire."

"I was moving my lips to tell him, 'Sir, don't do that,' when the first flame started in the back of his truck," added Mullin.

"I saw the flame, and I told him to jump," he said. "He dropped the hose, which sprayed gas all over the truck. I told him to jump and run, which would have been really a good thing to do, but instead, he tried to throw the 5-gallon can that he had just fueled out the back to get it

away from his truck, and that started the whole area on fire.

"So now he's on fire, the back of the truck's on fire, and the can that just hit the ground started a big fire behind the truck."

The man ran between the burning truck and the pump toward the store before he dropped and rolled on the pavement.

Mullin ran after the man, ripping off his two T-shirts to beat out the burning clothes, "but they did not do much good because they (caught) on fire," he said.

Jones ran to use his BDU top on the flames, and another man and a woman also helped the retiree.

Firefighters arrived on scene within two minutes and extinguished the blazing truck five minutes after arriving.

Ball said the damage to the AAFES fuel pump was estimated at \$10,000 to \$15,000 and to the retiree's 1993 Mazda pickup, \$2,500. The retiree, who received third-degree burns of his legs below the knees, later was transferred to local Brooke Army Medical Center's burn unit for further treatment.

Safe refueling and fuel handling guidelines

The American Petroleum Institute and the Petroleum Equipment Institute have provided consumer refueling and fuel safety guidelines that will help keep you and your family safe when refueling your vehicle or filling up gasoline storage containers:

- * Turn off your vehicle engine while refueling. Put your vehicle in park and set the emergency brake. Disable or turn off any auxiliary sources of ignition such as a camper or trailer heater, cooking units or pilot lights.

- * Do not smoke, light matches or lighters while refueling at the pump or when using gasoline anywhere else.

- * Use only the refueling latch provided on the gasoline dispenser nozzle, never jam the refueling latch on the nozzle open.

- * Do not re-enter your vehicle during refueling.

- * In the unlikely event a static-caused fire occurs when refueling, leave the nozzle in the fill pipe and back away from the vehicle. Notify the station attendant immediately.

- * Do not over-fill or top-off your vehicle tank, which can cause gasoline spills.

- * Avoid prolonged breathing of gasoline vapors. Use gasoline only in open areas that get plenty of fresh air. Keep your face away from the nozzle or container opening.

- * When dispensing gasoline into a container, use only an approved portable container and place it on the ground when refueling to avoid possible static electricity ignition of fuel vapors. Containers should never be filled while inside a vehicle or its trunk, the bed of a pickup truck or the floor of a trailer.

- * Only store gasoline in approved containers as required by federal or state authorities. Never store

gasoline in glass or any other unapproved containers.

- * When filling a portable container, manually control the nozzle valve throughout the filling process. Fill a portable container slowly to decrease the chance of static electricity buildup and minimize spilling or splattering.

- * Fill container no more than 95 percent full to allow for expansion.

- * Place cap tightly on the container after filling—do not use containers that do not seal properly.

- * If gasoline spills on the container, make sure that it has evaporated before you place the container in your vehicle. Report spills to the attendant.

- * When transporting gasoline in a portable container make sure it is secured against tipping

and sliding, and never leave it in direct sunlight or in the trunk of a car. Do not carry a container of gasoline in the passenger compartment of your vehicle.

- * Never siphon gasoline by mouth or put gasoline in your mouth for any reason. Gasoline can be harmful or fatal if swallowed. If someone swallows gasoline, do not induce vomiting. Contact a doctor immediately.

- * Keep gasoline away from your eyes and skin; it may cause irritation. Remove gasoline-soaked clothing immediately.

- * Use gasoline as a motor fuel only. Never use gasoline to wash your hands or as a cleaning solvent.

- * And finally, a reminder to not use cell phones while refueling your vehicle.